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SOURCE Ta-chung Jih-pao.

CHINESE FARMERS SUFFER FAMINE CONDITIONS IN SHANTUNG

[Summary: The T'eng-hsien Special Administrative District, Shantung, in general has enjoyed a good wheat harvest, although famine conditions have appeared in some villages. This has caused some suicides and deaths from starvation, and one farmer sold his children. Cadres have been remiss in handling taxation relief, and education in thrift.]

For the most part, in the Special Administrative District of T'eng-hsien the wheat crop has been plentiful and the level of production and level of standard of living have been raised. But some places are suffering from famine, in varying degrees, with rather severe conditions in some localities.

For example, in Fu-shan Hsien, between 20 July and 8 August, four suicides occurred due to famine and there have been deaths from starvation. In the seventh ch'u of Tsou Hsien, in the latter part of July, 1,448 families were without food; this was 19 percent of the entire population of the ch'u. If those who lack food are included, 42 percent of the population were affected. There are 23 villages where the famine is most severe, where 33 percent of the homes are without food. In Huang-shan Hsien the people have already sold 13 head of oxen. In Hsieh-ch'eng Hsien one farmer, because of the summer famine, sold his children.

After successive good harvests how can famine arise severe enough to cause starvation? The main reason is that the local leadership failed to realize the situation. The farmers, even though they had enjoyed good crops had suffered a long term of oppression by enemies and losses from natural calamities. To this must be added the fact that the population is large and the amount of land small. In some families there is lack of available manpower, or too many debts, or excessive spending for weddings and funerals.

The leaders are apt to look at the general rise in the standard of living and forget the individual cases where real hardship exists. Especially after the wheat harvest not a few cadres simply said, "There is no famine." Some of them make no move to allot the large supplies of food stored up in official granaries and available for relief.

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Another fault is that the cadre look only at their own little tasks without considering the over-all policy of the nation. When they collect grain taxes they do not remit taxes as they should. For example, in the seventh ch'u of Ts'ao Hsien the wheat harvest amounted to 1,964,700 catties. After deducting the grain tax and all loans and the wheat eaten by those engaged in water conservancy the whole ch'u had only 594,720 catties, the average for each individual being not quite 20 catties of wheat.

There is failure to encourage supplementary industries or to instruct the people to practise economy. There still exists serious extravagance. An example is that of a poor farmer named Yang Yen-i, who, when his father died, used up 1,000 catties of grain for funeral expenses. This year he harvested only 500 catties, with the result that because of their poverty his wife committed suicide.

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